

Evangelical Decline

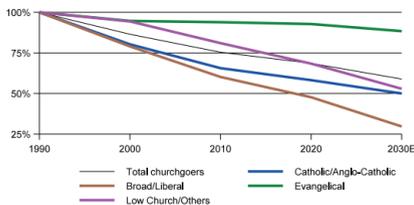
The number of churchgoers in England has been declining for many years, and, despite growth in some areas and groups, the general trend in Sunday attendance is likely to continue downwards for the next 10 or 20 years. Some 5% of the English population went to church on a Sunday in 2019, and 4% are projected to do so in 2030, and even fewer in 2040. When the figures are broken down by denominational group, that decline is seen everywhere except for the Orthodox and Pentecostal Churches.

The continuing Orthodox growth (which in numbers of attenders is small – 1% of total churchgoers in 2019 and maybe 2% in 2030) is dependent on whether many of the Romanian and other immigrants will continue in Britain or go home after Brexit; it is assumed about half will stay and the other half will leave.

The Pentecostal growth, however, is strong and likely to continue. They are 16% of all churchgoers in 2019 and are likely to grow to 22% by 2030 if present trends continue. Although Pentecostals are 97% Evangelical, nevertheless the number of Evangelicals as a whole is likely to decline in the decade ahead, from an estimated 1.4 million in 2019 to an expected 1.2 million by 2030. All other churchmanships (Broad, Liberal, Catholic, Anglo-Catholic, Low Church and Others) will also see declining numbers.

However, the rate of decline becomes important as it is not the same for each churchmanship. The graph shows how churchmanship has been declining since 1990 and is projected to decline in the decade ahead. It was first comprehensively measured in 1989 through the English Church Census to which 70% of all churches responded.

Rate of change in churchgoing numbers by churchmanship group, 1990 to 2030E



Overall over these 40 years it is estimated numbers will decline 41%, so roughly 10% per decade or 1% per annum (-1.3% more accurately).

The Catholic/Anglo-Catholic group (31% of the total in 2019) will decline at

Proportions of type of Evangelical by Denomination, 2020 and 2030

| | Anglican % | Baptist % | R Catholic % | Independent % | Methodist % | New Churches % | Pentecostal % | United Reformed % | Small Denoms. % | Overall % |
|-----------|------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 2020 | 21 40 39 | 1 75 24 | 0 62 38 | 4 86 10 | 51 44 5 | 0 30 70 | 6 44 50 | 10 75 15 | 1 94 5 | 7 55 38 |
| 2030 | 11 58 31 | 0 80 20 | 0 67 33 | 3 87 10 | 48 46 6 | 0 32 68 | 4 53 43 | 8 84 8 | 0 95 5 | 4 62 34 |
| Base 2020 | 220,000 | 210,000 | 30,000 | 150,000 | 20,000 | 140,000 | 430,000 | 10,000 | 70,000 | 1,280,000 |
| Base 2030 | 150,000 | 190,000 | 20,000 | 140,000 | 10,000 | 130,000 | 500,000 | 10,000 | 70,000 | 1,220,000 |

Well-Being

While religion is one of the factors measured in the most recent survey measuring national well-being, it did not appear as a significant factor in the government analysis. There were three areas identified as providing the greatest degree of life satisfaction among UK citizens:

- Self-reported health, which was highest for those saying it was fair or above
- Marital status which was highest for those who were married with young children, and
- Economic circumstances which was highest for those with an income between £24,000 and £44,000), especially if their money could be spent on "experiences" (such as eating out or staying in hotels) rather than buying products like food, or spending on travel (especially on commutes of over an hour).

Life satisfaction tended to decline with age, decreasing from ages 16 to 60 but increasing thereafter. For those under 16, those aged between 11 and 14 were mostly likely to report fairly or extremely unhappy relationships (8% to 9%).

A third, 30%, of people reported a high rating of satisfaction with their life overall, and 35% valued the things they were doing. Both percentages had increased between 3% and 4% over the previous 5 years. General happiness also was

an average of -1.7% per annum, which includes the many immigrant Catholic churches started 2000-2010 especially,

The Broad/ Liberal group (15% of the total in 2019) will decline at an average of -3.0% per annum, which includes many rural churches,

The Low Church/ Others group (8% of the total in 2019), which includes most of the Orthodox churchgoers, will decline at an average of -1.6% per annum, despite the small Orthodox growth.

The Evangelical group (46% of the total in 2019), which includes many in the Anglican, Baptist, Independent, New Churches and the Pentecostal denominations especially, will decline at an average of -0.3% per annum, so at a smaller rate than the others because offset by Pentecostal growth.

As a consequence of the Evangelicals declining less quickly than the others, their proportion of the total has increased, and they could be half, 51%, of the total by 2030. However they divide into three sub-groups, the Broad, Charismatic and Mainstream, the latter being a description given in 1989 and which has nothing to do with the Anglican and Baptist mainstream groups which have formed since, even if in practice many of the same churches will be included in both.

The Table shows the proportions in each of these three groups estimated for 2020 and 2030, where figures in Orange are Broad Evangelical, Green are Mainstream Evangelical and Grey are Charismatic Evangelical. There are no Orthodox evangelicals. The rounded base figures give the total number of Evangelicals in each denomination, not the total number of churchgoers in a denomination.

The Table may be read as follows: take, for example, the column headed "Independent" when in 2020 there are likely to be 150,000 Evangelical Independent churchgoers (as it happens about 92% of all Independent churchgoers), of whom 4% are Broad, 86% are Mainstream, and 10% are Charismatic. Over the 2020s, the number of Evangelical Independents drops by 10,000 to 140,000 (then 94% of the total), but the percentage who are Broad is then 3% while Mainstream have increased slightly to 87%. The Charismatic proportion has remained the same.

Overall it may be seen that it is the Mainstream group which is growing, while the Charismatics are decreasing. Partly this is due to the changing meaning of "charismatic" – what was classed as "charismatic" in 2010, say, is "mainstream" in many churches today. The total number of Evangelicals is forecast to drop -5% in the 2020s, but that is at a slower rate than non-Evangelicals who are forecast to decline by -22%.

SOURCE: Forward projections based on English Church Censuses for 1989, 1998 and 2005, to be published in *UK Church Statistics* No 4, 2020 to 2030, in 2020.

rated very high by 35% of the population, which was based on a large sample of about 150,000 people.

Some objective measures contribute to these results. The unemployment rate at 4% has decreased especially over the last 5 years, and job satisfaction at 60% has not changed greatly. While people volunteering is lower than it was 5 years ago (about 16% volunteered more than once in the previous year), participation in art and culture was 82%, only marginally less than 5 years ago.

Average household income was about £28,000 and 45% were mostly or completely satisfied with this. 6% found it quite or very difficult to manage financially, a percentage which has halved in the last few years. Those with no qualifications, 10%, were at their lowest this century, and those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) were 10% in 2018, down from 15% in 2012.

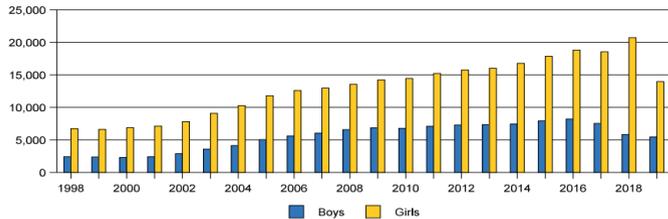
Some 43% of household waste is recycled (no change since 2012), and 10% of our energy use comes from renewable sources. Greenhouse gas emissions are gradually dropping, and have halved over the last 30 years. Sadly, few seemed to feel personal religion/faith was essential or even desirable to their well-being.

SOURCE: *Annual Population Survey*, conducted by the Office for National Statistics, published results for 2018, website, 27th May, 2019.

“A” Level RS Results

The numbers of students taking Religious Studies (RS) at “A” Level in 2019 dropped drastically from the numbers in previous years, as the chart shows. The drop is from 26,400 sitting the exam in 2018 to 19,400 in 2019, a drop of -26%.

Numbers taking Religious Studies at “A” Level



The decline is mostly (four times as many) among the female students rather than the males: -32% compared with just -7% for the boys. As almost three-quarters of those taking RS at “A” Level, 72%, are girls, this drop is very noticeable.

Why has it occurred? It might be a statistical “hiccup” and the numbers will bounce back. However, it may be because students now have to study two religions, not just one, which perhaps is not so popular. Perhaps too few teachers are qualified to teach RS at “A” Level well. Perhaps it is because it is harder to get a high grade for RS than in other subjects – 4% of students got the top A* grade in 2019 for RS, a percentage which has remained at about that level for some years, whereas for subjects overall, 8% of students gained an A*. Perhaps it is a growing realisation that RS is no longer an “easy” option that has deterred people or influenced the results.

The drop in 2019 is a little strange as the female numbers had been increasing fairly steadily over the past 15 years. Male numbers have also increased but not so substantially. Boys do not seem to find the course harder than girls – the percentages getting A* or other grades is virtually identical for the two sexes and has been for many years. RS for “A” Level is taken by a reasonable number – some 3% of all sixth form students over the last 5 years (4% girls, 2% boys).

At the time of writing the GCSE results are only available for England (the “A” Level results above are for the UK), since the other three countries follow their own systems of marking GCSE rather than the new number basis in England. RS at GCSE is more popular than at “A” Level – some 5% of all students take it (5% girls and 4% boys), and GCSE results are usually higher than across all other subjects.

So in 2019, 7% of RS students achieved a Grade 9 (10% girls and 4% boys), against only 5% across all subjects (5% girls, 4% boys). It is also taken pro rata by more boys – 46% of GCSE at RS are male students and 54% female. Grade 9 is a kind of A** on the old system. Grade 8 is the old A* obtained by 13% girls and 8% boys. These 2019 results are very similar to the 2018 results, the first year in which the numbering system was used.

The total number of 2019 RS students for GCSE was 230,000 and for “A” Level almost 20,000 – a quarter of a million young people studying Christianity (at least in part). In 2019 there were an estimated 34,000 young people aged 16 or 18 attending church. How come we've managed to miss 216,000 young people with at least some interest in the Christian faith?

SOURCES: Basic numbers come from the website www.stbustts.co.uk; previous results are in *UK Church Statistics*.

Spiritual but not Religious

Whether people are religious or spiritual or both (or neither) has been much researched in the last 20 years. Prof Steve Bruce in his book *Secularisation* suggests spirituality has three features: a belief in some sort of supernatural force or entity, a perception that being spiritual changes how one sees and feels about the world and an ethical dimension that being aware of our spiritual nature should make us better people.

A survey on “Christianity and the University Experience” in 2011 found the following mix of religiosity and spirituality in the UK shown in the Table together with an analysis from a 2016 Australian survey, grossing up for those who didn't know or couldn't answer the question:

| United Kingdom | | Spiritual? | | TOTAL |
|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------|
| Religious? | | YES | NO | |
| YES | 12% | 12% | 15% | 27% |
| NO | 34% | 34% | 39% | 73% |
| Total | 46% | 54% | 100% | |

| Australia | | Spiritual? | | TOTAL |
|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------|
| Religious? | | YES | NO | |
| YES | 26% | 26% | 16% | 42% |
| NO | 30% | 30% | 28% | 58% |
| Total | 56% | 44% | 100% | |

Similar research has been undertaken in the United States and Germany. What the table shows is that the UK and Australia are similar in the two YES/NO percentages, but more Australians feel they are Religious and Spiritual (26% to 12%) while in the UK more British feel they are neither one nor the other (39% to 28%).

The Australian survey found there were age differences in their figures – fewer younger people felt they were Spiritual but not Religious than older people (25% to 34%). There were also more women than men in this group. They also found that three-quarters, 75%, of those in this category used to attend church during their childhood, but in terms of their adult churchgoing only half, 48%, used to attend church and no longer do so, while 20% are currently occasional attenders. Rev Dr Philip Hughes commenting on the Australian figures asks, “Was religiosity important to them in their early years but they have subsequently rejected the institutional dimension?” He suggests the rejection of tradition evidenced by this group is a particular Western (and Anglophile) phenomenon.

The Australian study also asked about the *priorities which make adult life worthwhile*, and identified 13 items; the Table below shows the top 3 and the bottom two for the different groups:

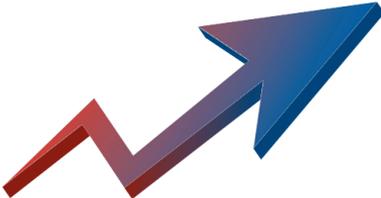
| Priority | Religious (42%) | Spiritual but not Religious (30%) | Neither Spiritual nor Religious (28%) |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Family | Family | Family |
| 2 | Religious faith | Friends | Friends |
| 3 | Friends | Being in tune with nature | Paid work |
| 12 | Watching films/TV | Sport | Participation in community |
| 13 | Sport | Religious faith | Religious faith |

These value orientations are deeply rooted, the Australian reporter suggested, arising perhaps from different personality types, but also showing that the concepts of spirituality and religiosity are exceedingly complex. Is this kind of research therefore meaningless or useless? Many scholars, like Profs David Voas and Steve Bruce, argue this kind of measurement shows the general movement away from religion into secularism. On the other hand it could be argued these people (the spiritual but not religious) are seeking resources “which nurture their spirit,” some finding such resources in nature, travel, music or other ways. Philip Hughes prefers to think these folk are entering into the “spiritual market-place,” in which there is a “real tension” for the churches – between personal spirituality and corporate or institutional spirituality. Ultimately, he would argue, “such programmes will be judged by their authenticity and effectiveness.” There is a much larger vacuum or space here into which the Truth will fit than is often identified.

SOURCES: *Secularisation*, Steve Bruce, OUP, 2011; *Christianity and the University Experience*, Durham, February 2011; “Spiritual but not Religious,” article by Philip Hughes, *Pointers*, Vol 29, No 2, June 2019, Pages 1f.

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FUTURE FIRST

FACTS FOR FORWARD PLANNING

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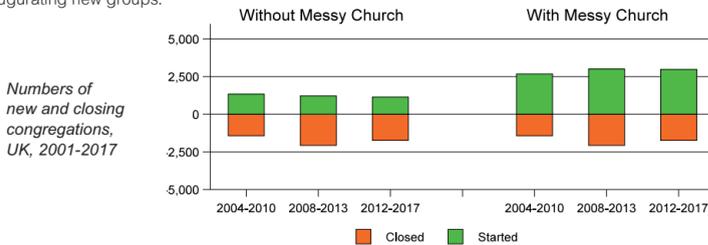
NOT DEAD, BUT GROWING!

Recent reports from such as the British Social Attitudes survey suggest that Christianity in Britain is almost finished or will rapidly become so. But the Irish phrase, *Ni bás ach ag fás, Not Dead but Growing, is closer to the truth!* New churches are being started all the time (though some churches are closing). In the 5 years 2012 to 2017 some 1,140 churches or congregations were started in the UK and 1,740 closed, so a net loss of 600. “Churches” in this context means a group of people meeting together on a regular basis to worship the Lord, invariably having a talk (or sermon) as well as prayers.

Effectively these are nascent congregations which, if they meet on a regular basis, could certainly be called a church, even if they come together in a village hall, community meeting place, school, or a borrowed church. The usual frequency of meeting necessary for the term “church” to be applied is probably monthly.

Services held in some rural churches just at Easter or Christmas or to celebrate some special occasion in a particular historical location are of course genuine services but hardly churches in the usual understanding of the word.

The above numbers exclude “Messy Church” which is a type of gathering which began initially in 2008 under the Fresh Expressions initiative of Archbishop Rowan Williams, and these have grown very rapidly (see separate article). They are not, however, the only new congregations being started. There have been a very significant number of Black Majority Churches (BMCs) started in the same period, of which the largest is by far the Redeemed Christian Church of God, which has seen 520 new churches started in the same decade, 2008 to 2018. In addition, 330 other BMCs also began in the same period. Some of the larger Pentecostal denominations, like Elim and the Assemblies of God, have always been strong in evangelism and in inaugurating new groups.



Numbers of new and closing congregations, UK, 2001-2017

Other churches or organisations are starting new congregations also. For example, the Anglican Diocese of Blackburn is aiming to start 50 new churches in the decade ending in 2026; Trinity Church in Cheltenham had started 13 new congregations by 2015, only one of which was Anglican; Holy Trinity Brompton had revived some 23 congregations by 2019.

HTB deliberately seeks to reach people through contemporary culture, which is by modern music, having large screens, and no pulpit! They are criticised for having “services that end up looking like concerts” but people flock to them – and hear the gospel in the process. Some of HTB's newly primed congregations have started further congregations in the succeeding years. St Helen's, Bishopsgate, has planted 13 churches, which have then planted another two. Almost half, 46%, of those attending are in the 18 to 30 age-group.

The Anglican Mission in England (AMiE), led by the Rt Rev Andy Lines, works both within and without the Church of England providing an “option for those who for different reasons are unable to fulfil their ministries within the structures,” and is essentially a church planting organisation hoping to start 25 AMiE churches by 2025 and 250 by 2050, according to its website.

It has been estimated that altogether some 25 new Anglican congregations have been starting in England every year for at least the last 10 years, and at least as many or more by other denominations, like the Counties, Partnership and Church Planting Initiative agencies for the Brethren churches or the FIEC's initiatives for the Independent churches. There are many smaller groups also, like Light and Life (an American Free Methodist movement), or the Churches of Christ (up to 7 new congregations per year).

The UK churches were challenged by the so-called “New Church” streams 30 years ago, and while their leadership has now mostly changed, they continue to start new congregations, probably some 370 in the years 2008 to 2018. Newfrontiers International and Vineyard are probably two of the best known New Churches today, but they have been starting an average of 8 and 3 congregations a year respectively over these 10 years.

To meet the needs of huge numbers of immigrants, many ethnic congregations, especially in London, have been started in this period also. Over 50 different worship languages are used in London, and 14% of total services in the capital are not in English! The growth of new congregations like the 210 catering for the various ethnic groups throughout the UK between 2008 to 2018 may not continue after Brexit, though existing congregations could grow larger.

What does all this mean for those wanting to turn around declining churches? Mark Davies, the London based Training Director of GLO-Europe, says church leaders have one of four choices: (a) close now, (b) do nothing and close later, (c) do some things, and still close later, (d) do some other things, either instead or additionally, and see a church steadily (but still slowly, this is the UK after all!) re-grow. He quotes Marion Knell who said, "A bend in the road is not the end of the road, Unless you fail to make the turn!"

What is all this saying? The church in the UK is far from dead or dying! Huge numbers of initiatives are being taken to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Most, but not all, are Evangelical. It is true that against this, many churches are closing – at least 3,800 between 2008 and 2018, and some of these, too, are Evangelical. And some of the new congregations do things in very different ways – some have no singing of hymns or songs, some never have Bible readings, or the Lord's Prayer, or (in one church personally observed) any prayer! But they are seeking to worship the risen Lord though some may feel that the place of Bible reading and prayer is essential to any definition of "church." The question, "When is a church not a church?" however, is a theological issue rather than a statistical one.

It is equally true that numbers with no religious faith are increasing rapidly, and while 5% of British people may go to church today, it is likely to be only 4% by 2030 and smaller still by 2040. To stem decline and promote growth, we need to seize the opportunity now. Jesus' challenge, "The fields are white unto harvest" (John 4:35) is timeless.

SOURCES: *UK Church Statistics* Nos 1, 2 and 3, ADBC Publishers, 2014 and 2017; speakers at the National Larger Anglican Churches Consultation, 2015; article "Not just rearranging deck chairs," by Ian Paul, *Church Times*, 16th December, 2016, Page 17; private correspondence; article in *Perspectives*, Partnership, No 57, Summer 2016, Page 14.

FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) begins to spread and in time to dominate more of the workplace and workforce, what implications could this have for the church and its employees? McKinsey & Company undertook a very detailed survey on the possible impact of AI over the 2020s for their Global Institute and published their findings. This is a brief summary of how these might relate to the UK church.

McKinsey & Co believe the impact of AI, automation technologies and robotics will generate significant benefits overall as it should lift productivity and economic growth. It will, however, cause decline in some occupations (they estimate it will impact some 60% of occupations to varying degrees) but will also create new occupations. Up to a third of the ultimate effects could have occurred by 2030.

They see the rising economy fuelling productivity growth which could especially increase health care in ageing societies, investment in infrastructure and energy, requiring more building construction. They see between 3% and 14% of the global workforce having to switch jobs which, while that may not include ministers, could well include members of their congregations. The changes will require more educational training, and time spent on social and emotional skills, creativity and high-level cognitive abilities. Middle-wage occupations could decline most and those affected will need to try to get re-employment within 12 months, so that their skill base can still be used. Handling worker transitions well will become a major need. The major transitions will be in physical jobs, and in office support.

"Customer interaction" (not the usual way of describing church fellowship!) will be a key developing need, as will the requirement for more care providers, builders and educators. This suggests new ways of teaching, preaching possibly, and ensuring youth programmes are kept up-to-date. It could well impact secondary schooling most, they feel. Managing people will probably require new skills, as will applying expertise and interaction with stakeholders. McKinsey & Co give a global overview and feel that about a fifth of occupations in the UK could be affected by 2030, but higher in Australia, the US and Canada, Sweden and Singapore. Most affected will likely be Japan, least affected Kenya.

They argue that this kind of transition is not new as most countries have moved out of agriculture and more recently manufacturing, but the transition can be painful for many with stagnant wages and unemployment, until rising productivity begins to generate economic growth. They would see the rise of shorter working hours, a rise in part-time work and the creation of new jobs. Collecting and processing data will become more and more automated.

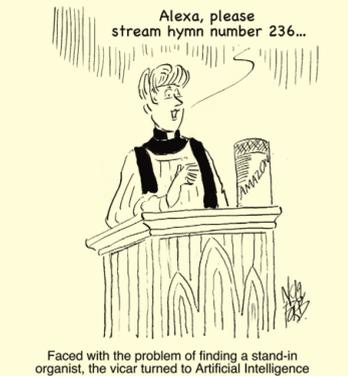
Ageing populations will be a key concern, and this will partly include the UK. Running churches with increasingly older people is already an anxiety, and likely to continue and multiply. Could that mean starting new fellowships rather than supporting declining ones? (The HTB model?)

Developing new technologies such as by computer scientists, engineers and IT administrators will grow, as will investment in better quality buildings, good for architects, skilled tradespeople, and construction workers. Countries will continue to make commitments to meet the Paris climate accord.

They also see the "marketisation of previously unpaid domestic work" by which they mean that the need for cooking, childcare, early childhood education, gardening and cleaning will generate paid work as women increasingly become absorbed into the general workforce. Government might tend to provide universal pre-school child care, for example. However, frictions in the labour markets could impede the transition.

For the church the implications seem to be the need for childcare workers, community and social workers, teachers and education support workers, food serving workers (hosts), creative designers/architects, IT specialists, etc. While these changes would impact clergy in their social care and leadership, it is more likely to impact adults in the congregation caught up in job transition. Does this imply change in ordination training? Additional mid-career support? McKinsey & Co say that AI provides both hope and challenge but it could also have a negative impact on personal relationships. Like most technological advances, AI might prove a bad master but a good servant.

SOURCE: Jobs lost, Jobs gained: workforce transitions in a time of automation, McKinsey Global Institute, www.mckinsey.com/mgi, December 2017.



Children in Need

Some 3% of all the children under 18 years of age in England are defined as "being in need", that is about 400,000 children. The number peaked at 405,000 in 2018. Once their need has been assessed by children's services and a decision made on what action to help them has been taken they come off the "in need" list. Some 54,000 are given a "child protection plan." That the list remains at about the same level each year shows that this is about the percentage being referred each year.

Over half, 53%, are in need because of abuse or neglect, 15% because of family dysfunction, 9% because of the child's disability or illness and 9% because the family is in acute stress – the top four reasons, accounting for 7 in every 8 children.

Many churches are already seeking to help such children and families through such ways as food banks, meals during the school holidays, children's clubs, breakfast clubs, after school clubs, etc.



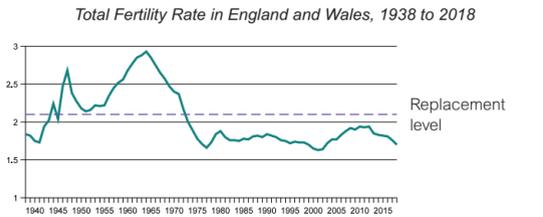
SOURCE: Characteristics of children in need, Department for Education, 25th October 2018.

CHILDREN IN CHURCH

It is well-known that one of the current problems which UK churches face is that there are too few children coming along. A question that is probably not asked very frequently is, "Where are children being born?" Are there some places in England, say, where numbers are above average or below average? The answer is YES and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) helpfully publishes the number of children born by Local Authority and County.

So in 2018, a fifth of the 625,000 children born in England were born in Greater London (19%), and considerable proportions in other urban areas like Greater Manchester and the West Midlands (=Birmingham) (both 6%), and West Yorkshire (5%). Fewest are in our rural counties, with eight having under 1% of the total (a combined 5%). Between these extremes the other 36 counties had 59% of all the births.

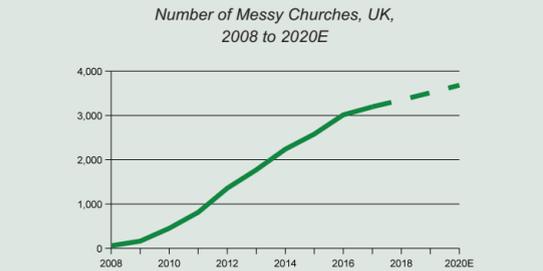
But numbers that happen to be borne in a particular calendar year aren't the best measure of child population trends. A better measure is the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) which gives the average number of children each woman between 15 and 44 is likely to have in their child-bearing lifespan. The ONS helpfully give the TFR as well. Replacement level for the population is 2.1 but the figure has varied over the last 80 years as the graph shows, and in 2018 was just 1.70, the lowest it has been since 2002.



The graph shows that we have only exceeded our replacement level in the years between 1945 and 1970 – corresponding to our "baby boom" when

MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church, started in 2008, but now included as a type of Fresh Expressions and backdated to 1992, has proved very popular and has grown rapidly as the graph shows. Strongly supported by Lucy Moore of the Bible Reading Fellowship, this has become a major innovation in the life of several thousand churches.



Analysis of Fresh Expressions, including Messy Church, by Rev Dr George Lings, then of the Church Army Research Dept (he has now retired), showed that in 2014. Their average size was 52 people, with those in suburban areas and city centres having more, and those in rural areas less (but even in rural areas the average size was 41).

There was a very considerable ethnic diversity among them. 43% were white-only, another 43% were mixed with at least two different ethnicities, and the remaining 14% had several ethnicities, showing the widespread attraction of these gatherings.

Most, 85%, were in the context of a single denomination, of which half, 48%, were Anglican, 9% Methodist, 8% Baptist, 7% Presbyterian, 5% Independent, and 8% all other denominations. A further 12% were jointly run as two denominations, of which Methodist/URC had most (7%), followed by Methodist/Anglican (3%). The remaining 2% were three or more

those now called the "Boomers" were born. Since then our TFR has hovered around the 1.75 to 1.80 mark. Does this mean fewer children and therefore a population decline? Well, it might were it not for the fact that England receives more immigrants than emigrants, and that we are living longer because of the quality of our health care, although the latest report suggests length of life at present to be at a static level.

The lowest TFR rate in the 20th century, since records began in 1938, was 1.66 in 1977, the only year thus far when the country has had more deaths than births. The lowest ever, in 2001, was 1.63. What about the "average family of 2.4 children"? Well, in the heydays of the 1960s it was actually closer to 2.8 children, but it has declined since. Women reaching 45 now have had an average of 1.9 children.

There are others things to note: (a) the number is based on all women but an increasing number are child free, so perhaps these should be excluded (the average percentage of women born in 1972 who are child free is 18%), (b) the average age of motherhood is now 31 whereas 50 years ago it was closer to 22, and (c) there are different types of family unit now such as single parent families, step families, etc. "The average number of children born to women who have had at least one child, stands at about 2.3 for women born in the early 1970s. In which case, 2.4 could still be argued to be a valid enough number," argues Nick Stripe, Head of Life Events at ONS.

Where then are the more fertile parts of the country? Broadly in the south east – there are just 11 counties where the TFR is 1.81 or over – Bedfordshire (the highest at 2.0), Berkshire, Buckinghamshire (both at 1.9), Cambridgeshire, Cleveland (the only one in the north), Essex, Greater London (Outer), Kent, Northamptonshire, Somerset and Wiltshire. Inner London, however, has the lowest TFR in the country – 1.39, the next lowest being Tyne and Wear at 1.51.

So do more births, or the likelihood of more births, mean greater numbers of churchgoing children? Yes and No – there is a clear relationship of the numbers in some counties but not in others. It works in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Essex, Outer London and Kent but not elsewhere. Even so, it hardly solves the problem of lack of children in our churches.

SOURCES: ONS release on birth statistics 1st August 2019, Table 3; ONS Blog by Nick Stripe, 2nd August 2019; *UK Church Statistics* No 3, 2018 edition, Table 13.11.

denominations working collaboratively.

They attracted very considerable numbers of unchurched people (45% on average), and good numbers of "de-churched," that is, people who have been away from churchgoing for a long time (average 10 years) but now returning (22%), with a third, 32%, those already attending church.

They also were attracting good numbers of young people – over half, 51%, of those attending were under 16.

Leadership was predominantly female, 74%, and less than half were ordained. While there was a person responsible for each one, it was a team effort, with an average size 13 people (or a quarter of those attending)! Having such a large team means the workload on so many volunteers is sustainable.



While a third, 31%, were still growing in size, half, 48%, found they had plateaued.

Clearly this is an important way of "doing church." Messy Church offers fun, food, fellowship and friendship in the context of a warm welcome and worthwhile worship. Guided informality is the key, but it is the sheer growth in the way this has taken off throughout the UK and throughout many denominations that rightly indicates this is a new format that is both popular and enticing to those outside the existing churches. Any movement which starts over 3,000 groups in 10 years is significant.

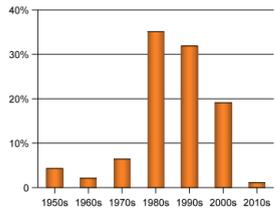
SOURCES: *The Day of Small Things*, George Lings, Church Army and the Church of England Archbishops' Council, 2016; *UK Church Statistics* Nos 2 and 3, ADBC Publishers, 2014 and 2017.

South Korean Mission Workers

The number of South Korean missionaries is carefully monitored each year by Steve Sang-Cheol Moon in the Korea Research Institute for Mission based in Seoul in South Korea. He tracks the number sent out by the South Korean churches with a survey which includes the number of mission agencies and the number of countries in which they work. Such information also used to be compiled for the UK but agencies have not been surveyed since 2006.

South Korean mission agencies have a long heritage, some of the longest being operational for over 70 years. As the graph shows, two-thirds, 67%, of current mission agencies began in the 1980s or 1990s, the heyday of the present Korean emphasis to fulfil Christ's mandate to take the Gospel to the whole world.

When present South Korean Mission Agencies began



Mr Moon is concerned because while the number of mission workers continues to increase, the rate of growth is much slower than it was. There was a slight increase in the number of mission workers in 2018 over 2017, an annual increase of 160 people to 21,400 in 2018. "The increase was largely due to the addition of older people who were retired from their secular jobs. Young people are more hesitant than in the past to commit their lives to the missionary cause because of the hard realities of support raising," he writes.

The older retired missionaries are called "silver missionaries." One agency, Senior Mission Korea, had 92 silver missionaries at the end of 2018 who had completed their training and were active in service. However, the issue of having sufficient support is very real – over half, 52%, of workers felt they needed an increase of over 20%. Just 19% felt their current support was acceptable. Existing workers worried over the future of mission efforts from South Korea largely because of the funding issue – commitment to mission was waning in Korean churches (so 34%), and many churches had financial pressures for other reasons also (another 34%). Further causes accounted for the rest.

The South Korean mission movement was sustained by 154 mission agencies in 2018, a number which has dropped from 168 in 2011, and was 5 fewer than in 2017. Most, 57%, of these agencies are fairly small, under 50 people, while a further 14% had between 50 and 99 people. There are just 5 large ones with over 1,000 persons. Half, 55%, work on an annual budget of £350,000.

The South Korean missionaries worked in 146 countries in 2018, down from 177 countries in 2011 and 159 in 2017. So there is a small contraction in mission agency outreach even if the total number of workers continues to increase slightly. Most agencies, 51%, work in between 1 and 9 countries; only 1 works in more than 100 countries – the Global Missionary Society, with over 2,500 members in 101 countries.

These South Korean mission worker numbers are considerably more than those from the UK, where the numbers have declined quite rapidly – from 7,600 in 1997 to 7,500 in 2001 to 5,900 in 2006. There were perhaps about 4,000 in 2018. In 2006 these UK workers served through 118 agencies and in 168 countries. While some agencies have merged or closed in recent years it is equally true that a number of new, smaller, agencies have begun.

The number of Koreans in the UK increased from 12,300 in the 2001 Population Census to 17,400 in 2011, plus a further 400 from North Korea. Two-thirds of these live in the London area. Wikipedia states the UN estimate of South Koreans in the UK as 6,800 in

SNOWFLAKES

The Church Times published details of its readership. Some 18,000 subscription copies plus casual sales, each read by between 2 and 3 people, so perhaps a total of nearly 50,000 readers. Some 11,000 readers have downloaded the *Church Times* app, and some 40,000 visit its website every week, up from 26,000 two years ago, with over a million visitors throughout the year 2018. Two-fifths, 41%, of its readers serve on a PCC, 12% are licensed Readers and 12% lead worship. Almost two-fifths, 37%, are clergy, including Bishops. Over a thousand copies go to ordinands and 300 to readers-in-training.

SOURCE: *Church Times* information, 28th June 2019, Page 35.

Sub-Saharan Africa. Across 28 Sub-Saharan countries, some 54,200 churches were tracked and the number of conversions they reported recorded over a year. Each church averaged 26 new believers, a third of whom were Muslim Background Believers.

SOURCE: Anon speaker at the Lausanne International Researchers' Conference, Kenya, 2018.

Well-being for Australian school pupils. The Relationships Foundation undertook some research on 7,500 Australian pupils and found that the key factors relating to their well-being were:

Gender: Boy-boy and girl-girl relationships were 50% stronger than boy-girl relationships
School size: Relationship strength dropped by 3% for every additional class per year level after the first year
Parental separation: Students with separated parents had 5% weaker relationships
Student-teacher relationships: Where student-teacher relationships were stronger by 10%, it correlated with student-student relationships being stronger by 5%.

SOURCE: Relationships Foundation Summer 2019 *Newsletter*, emailed 8th July 2019.

Global Homosexuality. Homosexuality is legal in 2019 throughout Europe, North America and Oceania (= the Western World), in most of Latin America outside Guyana and Asia apart from Myanmar and Brunei, but not in the Middle East (death penalty as punishment in Saudi Arabia and Iraq), and a few other countries. It is illegal in much of Africa (with imprisonment as punishment) though with the death penalty in Sudan. In a few countries (mostly Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Turkmenistan, Uganda and

| Size of towns used in Government analysis | | | |
|---|-----------------|--------|------------|
| Size | Population size | Number | % of total |
| Small | Up to 20,000 | 748 | 63% |
| Medium | 21 to 75,000 | 347 | 29% |
| Large | 76 to 225,000 | 91 | 8% |

SOURCE: 2011 Population Census.

2015, obviously suggesting a decline but this may not be comparing like with like. The number of members in the estimated 40 Korean churches in the UK in 2018 (mostly in England) was about 4,000, giving an average of about 100 members each.

However, as a country the South Koreans have a major demographic problem on their hands. The country is running out of children! Their fertility rate in 2018 was 1.24, slightly up from 1.20 in 2016, but much lower than the normal replacement level of 2.1, and one of the lowest in the entire world. Seoul, the South Korean capital city, had an average fertility rate of 1.05 in 2017. (The UK by comparison in 2019 is 1.81, and London was 1.74).

SOURCES: Article in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, Vol 43, Issue 2, April 2019, Page 188; *UK Church Statistics* No 3, 2018 Edition, Table 11.2.3; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign-born_population; *Statistics Korea*, Office for National Statistics Births, Fertility Rate-Borough.

Zimbabwe) male homosexuality is illegal, but female is legal.

SOURCE: Equidax, provided in map form by Statista website, June 2019.

Church Tax. In six European countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland) if you are a church member you have to pay an extra tax, which is to cover the services provided by the church for you, which are paid by the State. In these countries an average of 70% of the population say they are Christian, and 19% say they attend religious services at least once a month. The same survey was repeated in six countries where no church tax is paid (Belgium, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway and the UK) where on average 61% said they were Christian, and 21% went to church. Conclusion by the researchers: Countries with a mandatory church tax are not less religious than countries with no such tax.

SOURCE: Pew Research Centre European Research on mandatory church tax, website 9th May, 2019.

American decline catching up? Surveys of American Christianity show a continuing decline in religious participation, especially among Christians who are Democrats, where church membership has fallen from 71% to 48% measured over the periods 1997-1999 and 2016-2018. Republicans have moved from 77% to 69%. According to Mike Hout, sociology professor at New York University, "Americans are rejecting not the transcendent but structures and organisation" (of both political parties and the Christian church). The impact is especially seen among those in their 20s who, when they marry and have a family, are not (unlike their parents) bringing their children to church, making the US "on a path to secularism."

SOURCE: Report in *The Economist* 27th April, 2019, Page 37.

Towns. Question: What is a town? Official answer: a settlement with up to 225,000 inhabitants. There were 1,186 such towns in England and Wales in 2018. However, this definition is too wide-sweeping for some purposes so it has been broken down as shown in the Table:

| Size of towns used in Government analysis | | | |
|---|-----------------|--------|------------|
| Size | Population size | Number | % of total |
| Small | Up to 20,000 | 748 | 63% |
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